

A Red Moonstone Shines Brightly

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by [lefemmerouge](#)

Summary

Cass thought about her past as she walked across the rolling hills on the edge of the last kingdom in the Ever Realm she hadn't visited yet, Enchancia. Suddenly, a wormhole opened in front of her. She walked through without realizing it...

In a new world, Cass finds an unlikely companion, a former (and well-known) international thief. Both bond with one another even though they come from vastly different circumstances.

Notes

The interest in the Red Moonstone ship, of Carmen and Cass, [on Reddit](#), fanart, and a mention of this on the Shipping Wiki fandom page [for Cass](#) got me interested in this ship, and made me want to write this story. The same ship is also mentioned on Carmen's page. I believe this is the first ever Red Moonstone fic on AO3. For a similar fic, see my "[Cassandra and the Catgirl from the Sky](#)" fic which came out late last year.

Comments and suggestions are welcome!

Update on 12/15/24: This fic [was reposted on Squidge World](#). The revised text there has been reposted here, updating the fic.

Update on 5/8/26: An updated/revised version of this fic was posted [on Squidge World](#), including changing a link in the fic to ochaopt.org site, so it includes all the situation reports about the Gaza genocide, rather than a specific report, and adding in more indicators throughout the fic talking about the temperature. I increased the text by 571 words, or about 12.8%, and realized that this fic is a sort of isekai, at least for Cass and the summary was updated, along with other changes which made the fic even stronger than the original.

See the end of the work for [more notes](#)

- Inspired by [Restricted Work] by [ArtyWrites](#)

One year has passed, but... I am riddled with guilt every day. It sometimes feels like I do not age and that time has not passed.

Yet my suffering continues. While I still feel I was in the right, I know what I did to Rapunzel and that I hurt her. I had to get away from it all. I couldn't let her toxic positivity get to me... I had to get away... away from her, away from Corona, away from it all!

I need to find my own way in the world, my own way in the universe.

Cass thought about her past as she walked across the rolling hills on the edge of the last kingdom in the Ever Realm she hadn't visited yet, named Enchancia. Suddenly, a wormhole opened in front of her. She walked through without realizing it. She hummed to herself and closed her eyes, happily skipping as she went. Everything seemed like it was going her way.

When she opened her eyes, she was astonished. She stood on top of a black gooey substance, embedded with pebbles, which covered the ground. It had white and yellow markings. It was nothing like anything that she had ever seen before in her entire life. A metal monstrosity came hurtling toward her. She drew her sword and took a defensive stance.

"Stop, heathen! You shall not pass!" Her movement did nothing to stop the horseless chariot from speeding toward her. A window opened by some miracle, perhaps even by magic, she gathered. She heard a deafening shout.

"Get out of the road, lady!" The tone was *angry*. Cass was confused and unsure what she had done wrong. She decided to ignore the yelling person.

She stood her ground. She started to sing that she had [nothing left to lose](#). Out of nowhere, a lady in a bright red trenchcoat and fedora grabbed her off the street. Before she knew it, she was in the air, flying through the skies thanks to a glider backpack on the woman's back. She had no idea why this lady had grabbed her from the ground. Something seemed different. There were tall buildings with windows which stretched into the sky, almost like they were scraping clouds. She put her sword back in its sheath. This woman *did not* seem to be a threat.

The glider soon came to a stop. It gently reached the ground. In the past, the lady had crashed it when carrying her former crime school buddy. That scenario did not replay itself this time.

Cass looked up and saw a ramshackle building. The name "Carmen Outerwear" was emblazoned on the front. Collapsing her hangar backpack, the lady turned toward her. Her fierce blue gray eyes stared at Cass. She came closer. Her auburn hair was blowing in the wind. In some ways, this woman reminded her of someone she used to know, someone she had grown very fond of over the years, someone she felt she had hurt, someone she wanted to reconnect with, in a healthier way that involved re-building trust, not treating another person as second-best, and without hierarchy.

She was not aware that in this world, thousands of miles away, in a densely populated land strip, [thousands were being murdered](#) by a militarily superior force. These brutal attacks

resulted in massive displacement and a shattered society, and were paired with spread of disease, electricity blackout, food insecurity, and three land border crossings to come and go. This now-hellish place, known as Gaza, was many times worse than anything she had caused in Corona. It would baffle her mind if she knew about this genocidal butchery happening thousands of miles from where she currently stood. Since she didn't know about those horrors, at the present, only one thing concerned her now: *who was this person before her? Why do they seem so...familiar?*

"Who are you?" the lady insisted. Cass did not know how to answer. She stepped back warily, unsure of what to make of this woman. The woman was the epitome of fashion and beauty. Cass couldn't help but be drawn toward her, although she wasn't sure why. Conflicted with what she should say, she fumbled. "I...uh...am Cassandra...I have a sword and...I'm not afraid to use it!"

The lady laughed heartily. It had been one of the funniest things she had heard. *A person she had saved from the street was threatening her? How absurd!* She attempted to calm down the situation. "Ah, yes, swords, the weapon of choice for a lady with black hair. It suits you well. But I do not want to fight with you, not today."

Cass nodded. She continued to be uncertain of the intentions of this woman. Without a doubt, she could have drawn her sword right then and there. Considering her options, she decided to stand down.

"Fine...I'll follow you...but if you do anything sneaky, I'll have to strike back...with force!"

Whether she would act on this threat was questionable. More likely than anything else, it was a bluster to put this woman on edge. However, It didn't work, not in the slightest, if that had been her intention, in the first place.

The woman laughed once again. "Oh, Ms. Cassandra," she began, "come inside into my former hideout...but *don't* you tell anyone about it."

Continuing to be wary, she followed behind, but kept her eyes open. This could be a trap. Maybe, this was all a nightmare. Nothing made sense. The woman stopped and turned around. She outstretched her hand.

"Sorry for not introducing myself earlier. I'm Carmen Sandiego. You can just call me Carmen."

As she smiled, Cass shook her hand, although she remained skeptical of this mysterious woman.

Taking out a metal key from her pocket, Carmen unlocked the door and walked in. The ground floor had a workshop for Ivy, a laundry room, and a gym. She led Cass through the building and to the living room. In the back of her mind, Cass believed that someone had planned this whole thing to trap and deceive her. Every day, she suffered from the residual effects of Zhan Tiri's mental manipulation, leading to a level of paranoia.

What happened next was something she didn't expect. Carmen felt relieved. She put her keys on a table and pointed to a puffy, cushioned piece of furniture.

"Make yourself at home, Cassandra...I have to change out of these clothes as it's hot as the blazes today. But I'll be back in a second. Don't go anywhere."

Stunned at the hospitality, Cass smiled weakly in response. She wasn't sure what to think about this woman or her posh hideout. She had no idea where she was. But she knew one thing for certain: she wasn't in Enchancia anymore.

As Carmen went into the bedroom, she changed into more comfortable, and casual, clothes. Discreetly, she slipped into the study/storage area. She talked to her hacker friend in hushed tones.

"Player, I need an assist here." Not sure what she meant, the Canadian kid asked, "What is it, Red?" Now fully dressed, in almost record time, perhaps as a side effect of having to get dressed quickly when she went to crime school, she took out her earbuds. She then turned on the *video call feature*, surprising Player. He hadn't expected to see her face.

"I uh...rescued this woman from being hit by a car this morning. She had drawn a sword and was about to fight it? I found it bizarre."

Player didn't know what to tell her. *Why had Carmen even rescued this woman? How did she know this woman could be trusted?* Player shook his head.

"Red, I'm dumbfounded. Couldn't you have just dropped her off at a police station or something?"

Carmen rolled her eyes. *Didn't Player know that the police couldn't be trusted?* She grumbled.

"Come on, Player, don't ya remember when it was revealed that cops in this city were sending racist, sexist, and homophobic texts [to each other](#), and a bunch of cases were compromised?"

Exasperated, she added, "I'd trust a pig rolling in mud more than these damn cops. They are corrupt to the core."

Player backed off. The last thing he wanted was for Carmen to be angry at him. He tried to move the conversation back to the original subject.

"So...Red, did you call me because you want me to look up more about...*this woman*?"

Carmen nodded. She surreptitiously snapped a quick photograph of Cass, who was lying on the couch in the living room. Player teased Red.

"She totally seems like your type, Red..."

Carmen looked at him with a scowl. Her face was red as a tomato. *How could he even say that! It was so embarrassing!*

"Yeah sure, Player." She then said, as an aside, "oh, and her name is Cassandra. Let me know if you find anything. I'll keep you posted if I learn *anything else*."

After getting off the video call, Player realized something odd. *Carmen was back at the hideout again?* He found it weird because he thought that she had taken a break from all of that. *Hadn't she gone out on her own, wanting to forge her own path?* He shrugged. He expected her to call him back. He kicked himself for not bringing this up. One day, he wanted to go to the hideout as well. But he knew that wouldn't happen unless he made an excuse for it.

Meanwhile, back on the couch, Cass saw a black object with a bunch of colored buttons on it. In all her time in Corona, and traveling across Ever Realm, she had never seen such a device. Curious, she pressed the red button. She heard a sizzling sound. A picture appeared in front of her eyes on a rectangular black box with a screen of some type. Sound blared out of it, screaming into her ears. She turned away and gathered enough courage to face the noise. She pulled out her sword and raised it. "I will not let this infernal box dictate my life! Stop at this instant!" Her words had no effect.

As she was about to strike the final blow and cut the device in half, Carmen bolted out of the door. She pulled Cass down. "Unhand me, woman!" she yelled. Shaking her head, Carmen could do nothing but laugh. Cass continued to struggle, attempting to escape, like a house cat that didn't want to be held.

Annoyed, she asked, "why are you laughing! This *isn't funny*. This...device...whatever it is, is hurting my ears! I want to make it stop."

Carmen carefully pulled the sword from Cass's hand, put it on the ground, and breathed deeply. This woman was more trouble than she had anticipated. *Where had she come from, anyway?*

"Ok, I'm gonna need you to calm down a bit, Cassandra." She then pressed the red button on the controller. The screen went dark. Cass felt a little better now. Even so, she remained perplexed. *What was the strange black rectangle on the wall? How was it connected to the device?* She had no idea. Before she could say anything, Carmen pointed to the rectangle. "That's a television." She then picked up the controller, adding "and this is a remote. It turns on the TV. You can watch movies, shows, and whatever you want on there...it's the ultimate entertainment device."

Although Carmen's explanation helped, Cass still had no clue how any of it worked. She sighed. She lay down on the couch. It was as comfortable as anything in Corona. For everything that Raps put her through, treating her as someone who was second-best, someone whose identity was subsumed within her own, and everything else, she couldn't forget the luxurious accommodations within the Corona castle. Although there was no doubt that Raps had devalued her in many ways, she knew that Raps, on some level, still cared about her, even when they were apart. *What would Raps think of her now?*

"I'm sorry," Cass began. "Everything about this world is new and different from what I'm used to. I've never seen this device you call...a television...or the remote that controls it."

This made Carmen concerned. *Where was this woman from anyway? Could she be someone brainwashed by VILE to take her out for the last time? Had she made a mistake in letting her into the hideout?* She had to know more.

"So, Cass...can I call you that?" Cass nodded. "...What is the place you are used to? Where's your...home base?"

Processing the questions slowly, Cass responded carefully. Just as Carmen was unsure about her, she was not completely convinced she could trust Carmen, at least not yet. She decided to be honest, in hopes she could get home. "I'm from the kingdom of Corona...it's ruled...or should I say will be ruled...by a girl with auburn hair, Rapunzel...and her husband Eugene."

Carmen started to say something. Cass interrupted her, and continued. "After some...things happened, I don't live there anymore...I've been traveling on my own for about a year to get my head straight...and forge my own path."

This made Carmen even more interested. *She almost seemed to be doing the same thing as her!* Maybe they would have more in common. She decided to ask her more questions. Instead of telling Player secretly about Cass, perhaps she could introduce her to him, virtually. "So, where is this Corona, located?"

Without much thought, Cass responded "why, in the Ever Realm, of course. Don't you know about it?" Carmen shrugged. She had never heard of either one before. *Had this woman been living under a rock?*

"I'm...not familiar with...that place...can you point it out to me?" she asked, remaining inquisitive. She picked up a wooden stand near the window, which had a brass metal footer. It was designed for a globe to sit on top of it, and mobile enough to carry around a living space. While the electronic maps that Player could come up with were helpful, she liked this globe better sometimes, especially since elevation was built into it. You could, with your hands, feel how low, or high, an area was. Also, it could be used to play the globe-spinning "where your finger lands game" or what her friends called, in jest, "where in the world is Carmen Sandiego" game.

Cass stared at the globe, spun it around, searching intently. *What were all these lines, borders, and symbols? Why were they there? Where was Corona?* She started to panic. "Corona isn't on here...are you absolutely sure this globe is the right one?" This puzzled Carmen. *How could she not point to her homeland? Who was Cass anyway?* This woman worried her, more than anything. "Yeah, it's right. It's a globe of Earth I bought at an antique shop last year."

This scared Cass. *What did Carmen mean by "Earth"? What was this world she spoke about?* To make sure her ears weren't deceiving her, she asked a follow-up question. "Are you sure it's Earth?" Carmen looked at her strangely. *Why would Cass ask this? Didn't she live on the same planet as her?* "Yes, it is," she said matter-of-factly.

Not wanting to bother Carmen with any further questions, she accepted what Carmen said as the reality. She had no idea how she had come to Earth. While she would have asked Varian about it, he wasn't there. She felt lost, untethered from reality. *What if she never saw her dad*

again, or...even Raps? How in the world could she even get back to Corona...or even the Ever Realm?

There was a long, uncomfortable silence between Cass and Carmen. Each of them waited for the other to say something. An idea came into Carmen's head. Maybe they could relax in the sunroom on the roof of her former headquarters. It was only two floors up.

She quickly grabbed Cass's right hand, and ran toward the elevator. It was old and had a metal screen which you had to close manually. "I'm gonna show you one of my favorite rooms of this warehouse." Hopping inside the moving metal box scared Cass, but...it also amazed her. *What were the systems that caused it to move? Why were the dials lighting up like there were candles hidden behind them?* It fascinated her. Although she might not act like this normally, her keen interest in technology came from spending time with her good friend, Varian. Although some people may have thought she had romantic feelings for him, she never once had feelings for men, including him.

Carmen stepped out of the elevator, still holding the right hand of Cass, and sped up the stairs. Not surprisingly, although the building was somewhat accessible, thanks to twin elevators from the ground floor and third floor, no elevator reached the roof. That could only be accessed by climbing the stairs. They soon reached the lush sunroom, an enclosed space filled with daylight. It had many views of San Francisco.

Alternatively called solariums, conservatories, sun parlors, or sun porches, these rooms had the advantage of bringing in outside light while serving as a shelter from adverse weather. They often featured passive solar heating, with the sun's rays easily illuminating the room. In some cultures, these rooms were secluded and partially enclosed within a garden. In the case of this hideout, the sunroom had the dual purpose of collecting sunlight for warmth and offering scenic views. Most of the walls were composed of framed glass. There were also internal climate controls to make sure it was the right temperature inside the room.

Cass was amazed. The views, the design, and the layout were one thing. But when entering the room, she felt calmness rush over her. She bowed her head and kissed Carmen's hand. "Thank you for bringing me to such a wonderful place...This is the first time I've ever stepped foot in a room...like this." Carmen's face, often a rakuda brown color, became warm and flushed, even a little reddish. She was totally unprepared for something like this. Starting to stutter, Cass interrupted her. "I'm...sorry...it's a royal habit. I was a lady-in-waiting for a princess, you know."

Hearing that made Carmen perk up a bit. *Who was Cass, really?* She knew that Cass came from the Ever Realm, and, more specifically, a kingdom named Corona within it. She surmised that Cass had some feelings for this princess she served in the kingdom. Otherwise, her life was a mystery. She wanted to learn more.

At the same time, she wanted to put her new friend at ease. *Who was she to ask Cass about her life in this other world, as she termed it?* She saw in Cass someone trying to find their place in the universe. That really resonated with her. "I can relate...I grew up on an island of thieves...and I later realized they were only out for themselves." Unsure of how her new lady friend would react, she glanced over at her. The hazel eyes of Cass were intently staring at her.

Clearing her throat, she continued. "I became a thief who steals from other thieves." Cass chuckled. What she had experienced was much worse. She almost acted like it was a bad memory.

"Oh, that's small potatoes. My mother kidnapped this princess, Rapunzel. I was raised by the royal guard." She breathed deeply. She felt a weight lifted from her chest after confiding in Carmen. She felt comfortable around her.

"And, well, she had the gall to say we were sisters or some shit. I fucking hated that...and she devalued me."

She then shook her head and sighed.

"So, I tried to make my own destiny, but the rage, anger, and hate I felt for her was manipulated by a fucking evil sorceress, Zhan Tiri. Luckily, she was defeated, but I *couldn't* stay in Corona anymore...not after what I did."

Carmen didn't know exactly what she was talking about, or who "Rapunzel" or "Zhan Tiri" were. But she could sympathize. Surely, she hadn't been involved in anything like what Cass went through. She hadn't tortured, kidnapped, extorted, vandalized, blackmailed, or been otherwise cruel to people. However, when she had been mind controlled by VILE for many months, she stole for them repeatedly. Since then, she had worked hard to make amends for what she did. She imagined that Cass did the same thing, in her own world, in her own way.

Just then, a thought came to her. She snatched her phone from the nearby table. Turning her head to Cass, she asked, "can I take a photo?" Cass shrugged. She had no idea what was happening and shrugged. Carmen took that as an agreement, and quickly snapped a photo. Rubbing her eyes, Cass was baffled by this tiny lighted box. She picked it up, studying it intently. *What was this infernal device? And what is a "photo"?*

"Uh, Carmen, what is *that*...thing?" she asked, pointing at the phone. Carmen chuckled. She really worried about Cass. *Where had this girl been living?*

"It can take photographs...call people...send messages...and other stuff."

Cass continued scratching her head. The only word that she recognized was the word "message." She had heard it before.

She said innocently, "so I could write a letter to someone with that...device?" Carmen nodded. There wasn't time to teach her digital literacy or anything like that. Instead, she wanted Player to see her.

"Can I introduce you...virtually...to my friend, Player?...he's *a hacker*." Cass didn't know what words like "virtual" meant. She thought that Carmen's friend must be either a chump who does things without any skill or a person who cleared brush in a wilderness. Quickly, the screen flashed. A young teen with deep brown hair, wearing a gray-red jacket, navy blue shorts, and gray sneakers stared back. This is not what she thought a hacker would look like.

"Hey, Red," the teen answered. Cass had no idea who this person was, or how in the world he could be talking with them. She looked at him with an expression of utter confusion. Player could tell.

"So...you are the Cassandra that Red told me about," he said.

She quickly became defensive. *How could this...damn kid...know her name? Who the heck did he think he was?* "How do you know that? *Who* told YOU?" Carmen held Cass's hand, then whispered in her ear. She told her that Player was her friend. She added that she had told him about her, in hopes of learning more about her. This put Cass at ease, although she remained a bit wary.

"Sorry for that...", she said. "I'm adjusting to this strange place, with all these devices you call phones, televisions, these glass fixtures with weird metal pieces inside, photographs, and mechanical horseless chariots." She added, "I didn't think a so-called 'hacker' would be a person sitting in a chair and looking at a bunch of glowing black boxes." Player didn't know what to say. He had never met, virtually or in-person, anyone like Cass. She almost seemed to be, in his estimation, from another time or place. His supposition was completely correct.

He started asking questions. "So, Cassandra, I searched across a bunch of databases and found *nothing* about you...it's almost like you are a ghost."

Cass took extreme offense to that. First of all, he knew her name. *Now, he was saying that she didn't exist!* Suddenly, Carmen interjected, surprising not only Cass, but Player.

"She's from some kingdom named Corona, in the Ever Realm and was a...uh...servant...I think...for this princess named Rapunzel."

He nodded. With them both staring at him intently, he quickly typed on his keyboard. He sighed and put up his arms in defeat. He was missing something, but did not know what.

"I can't find anything...*no country or world* named Ever Realm...no princess named Rapunzel...there's a bunch of coronas out there, either outer atmosphere of the Sun, a type of beer, a software company, a carbonated drink, a card game, some songs, a type of virus, and the name of a car...but *no kingdom*."

Cass grumbled. What Player said confirmed her suspicions: that she had come to this strange planet named Earth, as Carmen called it. She shook her head.

"I guess I'm stuck here then. I was near this kingdom called Enchancia and suddenly ended up in front of some horseless carriage riding on some weird black gooey surface. *A person yelled at me*, I pulled out my sword, Carmen brought me here...and well, that's it."

Player tried to reassure her. He didn't want her to lose hope. Maybe they could get her back to Corona, somehow. "I'll do what I can to help. I'll ask around."

Cass smiled. That's exactly what she wanted to hear. "Thank you, Player." The video call ended. Carmen shut off the screen and stashed the phone in her pants pocket. Cass leaned in close. She had to thank her new friend somehow. Without much thought, she gave her a loud

smooch on the cheek. She whispered, "I'm glad you talked to your friend. I hope he can help."

Carmen's body became warm, and her face became as red as a raspberry. Her heart began beating faster. Her pupils began to dilate. Her palms became sweaty. She felt weird, feeling differently than ever felt before. This seemed different. As her left eye turned to Cass, she knew what this all meant. She put her arm around Cass and softly replied, again without thinking about it too much, "I'd do anything for you...I'm so relieved you are here...with me."

Cass would have, in the past, shirked away, but she did not. She had, even when she was controlled by the Blue Moonstone powers and manipulated by Zhan Tiri, one goal: to gain more respect and self-worth, something which had been denied to her. She had unloaded her frustrations into actions that seemed irrational but were justified. In a moment of deep longing, she hugged Carmen back and said, "you are *my Red Moonstone*, grounding me with your love and protection...and for that, I am forever grateful."

They continued to embrace one another and enjoyed one another's company. While they had only met, their personal connection became deeper with each passing minute and hour, even though they came from different worlds. The challenges ahead for them they would approach together, and their lives would be *intertwined more* than either could have imagined.

End Notes

The opening of this fic is a very loose adaptation of the season 5 opening of Samurai Jack, which is spoken by Jack himself. Used [this guide](#) by Mooooooshier to help with tags for this story. Also summarized information from the "Sunroom" Wikipedia article. And yes, people with darker skin can blush, but it isn't, from the various web pages I read, not always as noticeable as it is in lighter-skinned people. The pages for "Cassandra" and "Zhan Tiri" on the Tangled wiki were helpful, along with the Villains Wiki page for Cass. I also used different definitions of hacker here, to add to the confusion Cass is feeling, and the page for Player on the Carmen Sandiego Wiki for other information. I'm also assuming, with this fic, that Elena of Avalor, Sofia the First, and Tangled are all in the same realm [same realm](#). I mean, why not? I also used the International Gem Society's "Moonstone Symbolism" page for the ending part and will probably try and add more symbolism about it in later, possible parts of this story, if I choose to write them and this fic really catches on. I was thinking, originally, of making this fic a slow burn, and perhaps it sort of has some characteristics of that, but I also could see them connecting to each other early on. I didn't think I could write over 4,000 words for this story, but here we are. Inspiration for locations and such is the eighth chapter of great fic entitled "[Sandiego's Seven](#)". Funny enough, I wrote much of this fic before I moved into my new place which... has a sunroom!

Sadly, on Apr. 17, after some back-and-forth, the admin of Sunset permanently suspended my account (and removed ALL 35 of my fics, including this one) for mishandling interactions with certain users *even after* I apologized to said users and removed certain passages of two fics. As such, I would **strongly** recommend against *anyone* joining that site, or Superlove, as both admins (Melo/Kat for Superlove, Agnes for Sunset) are friends with each other. Those admins are very particular and not in a good way. I find the whole circumstance deeply unfortunate.

Works inspired by this one

[Rise of the Scarlet Wildcat](#) by [lefemmerouge](#)

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